

# ROCK GUIDE

Gigs & gossip with  
**ALAN CORR**



**I**MAGINE this. The Saw Doctors live and leery on *Top of the Pops* at Number 1. Wake up, it's a bad, bad nightmare. Now slip back into sleep and see The Cranberries perform on a heavenly stage, clouds waft by, angels sing, harps drift in and out of the celestial picture.

The Cranberries are the real ambassadors of new Irish music. No raggle-taggle deification, no power chords and stubble. Just beautiful, uplifting songs and fresh-faced innocence.

Their five-track demo fell into the hands of *The Rock Guide* in early summer. It hasn't left the

sound of water trickling, bells shimmering and the wind howling in the distance, Dolores keens disdainfully about betrayal with haunting reverence. This is eerie and unearthly music.

The Cranberries sound like banshees drifting three feet off the ground in a forest at night. No, no... The Cranberries are like wind whistling through lone icebergs in the Arctic. Realistically speaking, The Cranberries sound a bit like 10,000 Maniacs when Dolores

monies. There was more sackcloth and hairshirts in the crowd than the usual rock 'n' roll uniform of leather at their recent Dublin show.

These uncrowned kings and queen of Irish music are from Limerick. They

lores smiling as she celebrates the magic of life.

In performance, she has a wounded expression on her face. She stands in profile, flanked by

# CRANBERRIES

cassette deck since. Songs like *Dreams* and *Put Me Down* are winsome beauties, singer Dolores O'Riordan — who turned 20 last week — has a voice that swoops, keens and grates with intoxicating wonder. *Put Me Down* is a heartbreaker. Following a grave opening with the

sings straight. A bit like The Smiths when they scale those Mountains of Mourning. And a bit like The Sundays in their vulnerability and sense of loss.

The Cranberries see the world through sepia-tinted glasses. Their barren songs exist in a twilight world: a minimum of guitars and a dusty landscape of lone snare shots and spectral har-

goyle-like by guitarist Noel Hogan and his bass-playing brother Mike. "When we play I'm not going to jump out and shout 'Hellooo Dublinnnn. We're gonna rock you tonight!' We're not like that. I want to concentrate on the music and the emotions I'm feeling. You know, people who play bands are normal at first and then they become rock stars. I don't want that."

She keeps getting hit by emotional brickbats, falling out of love and pining away idealistically for something that is, really, out of this world. "No, some of our songs are happy," she says. "*Dreams* for instance is optimistic. But I was always one for the tears." True, she was crying when she wrote *Linger*. And you can tell. But on *Dreams* you can hear Dó-

liting atmospheric. They needed a female singer to suit the somnambulist nature of the songs. When drummer Ferg Lawler first heard Dolores sing he was blown away: "I was shocked, just completely shocked. I couldn't believe she hadn't been nabbed by some other band. She has such an incredible voice."

Dolores, unsurprisingly, likes church music. She was part of her school choir which won The Sligadh Festival for five years running. She even got to meet Bibi Baskin.

"In school, I always wanted to be in a band," says Dolores. "I was aware of the music my parents were into like traditional and choir music and I loved that but I wanted to be in a band where there were no barriers, where I could write my own songs. But I thought joining a band was only something that happened in America."

"I know nothing about music. I haven't got a clue why all the British music papers like us so much. It's a howl. It's interesting that people who know everything about music should take such an interest in me who knows nothing about music."

Dolores was so untouched by rock culture that she didn't even know what a gig was. Didn't know that Limerick had a recording studio in the shape of Xeric where bands made records. "The first time I met the rest of the band," she recalls, "they were talking about amps and things I'd never heard of. I was going around writing all these words down so I could remember them." And that's one of the things that makes The Cran-

berries so special. In their eyes everything is new.

"Getting all the attention from the record companies was scary at first," says Dolores. "I'm from a tiny parish called Ballybricken outside of Limerick, in the middle of nowhere and suddenly I had all these big heads from record companies wanting to talk to me. I was spaced out at the start but we've dealt with it and relaxed. We got loads of offers but we waited five months before we signed to Island. They're really great, they let us do exactly what we want. They don't give us any hassle or pressure. They know they'll ruin us if they rip us from our roots."

The Cranberries simply don't know how to be a "rock" band any other way. There's no awareness of anything that's gone before. This is the purest, most untouched and unaffected band that this country has ever produced. Please don't fail to be mystified and seduced by their music when their four-track EP comes out next Monday.

**The Cranberries release a four track EP on Island this Monday. It includes *Uncertain, Nothing Left at All, Pathetic Senses* and *Them*.**



Not really on the case: Chrissy Steele

## VINYLTAP



Sweet talkin'?

**Chrissy Steele**  
**Magnet Against Steele**  
**Chrysalis**

The question isn't *who* is Chrissy Steele. The question is *why* is Chrissy Steele. Chrissy has got model looks, model hooks and a big long skyscraper of a voice. The musak is the swaggering hard rock tosh, the kind heard all over west coast America. This is pointless garbage, it's not even funny. At one particular lyrical low-point, Chrissy sings "*You've never seen the likes of me*". Wanna bet, honey?

**System 7**  
**System 7**  
**Ten Records**

The really quite acceptable face of bleepy music. Very elevator in parts but it's lifted out of the mundane by contributions from "experimental" guitarist Steve Hillage, recent U2 and PM Dawn mixer, Youth, Happy Mondays producer, Paul Oakenfield and Aniff Cousins of Chapter and Verse who provided the brill rap on Kirsty McColl's *Walking Down Madison*.

**Guns n' Roses**  
**Use Your Illusion Pts I & II**  
**Geffen**

Now this is what I call rock 'n' roll one and two.

**Various**  
**Tom's Diner**  
**A&M**

Suzanne Vega, the arch priestess of pretence, was always fond of navel gazing but she's picked a prize piece of fluff out of her belly button with this one. *Tom's Diner* is a collection of versions of her downright irritating mid-morning vignette of the same name. Suzanne's twee verse about parking her butt at a cafe counter and

watching the world creep by is bowdlerised by artistes like Michigan and Smiley (?), After One (?), and of course the people who started it all off, DNA. There's even a version in German. REM under the guise of Bingo Hand Job have the best reading: a live pisstake, complete with EMF and Madness lyrics. Then again that's available on the B-side of *Near Wild Heaven* or is it *Shiny Happy People*? In any case, buy both and avoid this.

**Talk Talk**  
**Laughing Stock**  
**Polydor**

If insects could play music — and they probably do, pop fans — this is what it would sound like. The minutiae of sound: tiny jaws clicking, a million legs brushing aside grains of sand, the pitter patter of tiny feet on leaves, a million wing beats a second.

The six songs here contain spartan arrangements, interrupted by monolithic blasts of guitar and embellished by woodwind instruments, short and brutal bursts of heavy riffing and the doomsday monotone of Mark Hollis.

*Laughing Stock* is the soundtrack of oblivion, these are the final nanoseconds before complete shutdown, the split, split second before build-ups decay as the A bomb after-shock rushes in. So what if Talk Talk haven't thought of any new ideas since *Spirit* from the *Colour of Spring* LP. The Blue Nile (who are also dead good) have been made life-time peers of good music for two albums of homogenised ambient sounds.

This album also gives Talk Talk a chance to strike back at EMI Records who recently released the disgusting *History Remixed* "Best of" album, wherein every porcelain-perfect note was turned to crap by dance beats.

No worries, *Laughing Stock* is as welcome as a hole in Saddam Hussein's head.